

USSR

Marshal of the Soviet Union Sergey S. BIRYUZOV  
December 1966

(U) At the time of his death in an air crash near Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in October 1964, Marshal Biryuzov was a First Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces. He had succeeded Marshal of the Soviet Union Matvey V. Zakharov in March 1963. After Stalin's death, Biryuzov had risen steadily in the Soviet military hierarchy and had been advanced over other more prominent officers.

(U) Biryuzov, who was born on 8 August 1904 in Skopin, Ryazan Oblast, in the present RSFSR, did not serve in either World War I or the Civil War. He joined the Red Army in 1922 and the Communist Party 4 years later. Commissioned in 1927, he had risen to command of the 28th Proletarian Rifle Regiment in Novorossiysk by 1935.

(U) He was graduated from the Frunze Military Academy in 1937. In June 1940, he was promoted to major general and in late 1941 was Commander of the 132d Rifle Division of the Southern Front. From late 1942 to mid-1943, he was Chief of Staff of the 2d Guards Army (commanded by Malinovskiy) at Stalingrad. In July 1943, he was Chief of Staff of the Southern Front. He was promoted to lieutenant general the next month and shortly thereafter became Chief of Staff of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

(U) In May 1944, he was promoted to colonel general and made Chief of Staff under Marshal F. I. Tolbukhin, Commander of the 3d Ukrainian Front, which moved into the southern Balkans. Biryuzov continued in this post when Tolbukhin became Chief Soviet Representative and Chairman of the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria. In January 1945, Biryuzov was Commander of the Soviet Occupation Army in Bulgaria, with headquarters in Sofia. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria.

Biryuzov's next assignment was in the Soviet Far East as Commander of the Maritime Military District, with headquarters in Voroshilov. In the summer of 1953, he replaced Lieutenant General V. P. Sviridov as Commander of the Soviet Central Group of Forces in Austria. He returned to the USSR in July 1954 to become First Deputy Commander of the Soviet Air Defense Troops. The next year he was appointed a Deputy Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief of Air Defense (PVO) Troops, being promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union.

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Deputy Chairman of the new Soviet-Bulgarian Friendship Society. In 1959, he reportedly suffered a coronary condition but he continued to make public appearances at numerous foreign receptions. In the spring of 1962, Biryuzov replaced Marshal K. S. Moskalenko as Commander-in-Chief of Strategic Rocket Troops.

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Biryuzov apparently came through the Cuban missile crisis unscathed, for in March 1963 he was advanced to succeed Marshal Zakharov as Chief of General Staff.

(U) Biryuzov was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from a military district in both 1946 and 1954. In 1951, he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR. In 1958 and 1961, he was elected to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from the Estonian Republic. He was named a full member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1961.

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(U) Biryuzov held the titles of Hero of the Soviet Union and Peoples Hero of Yugoslavia. His decorations included 5 Orders of Lenin, 3 Orders of the Red Banner, the Order of Suvarov First and Second Classes, the Order of Kutuzov First Class, and the Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy First Class. In addition, he held many medals and foreign orders.

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